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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 001110

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL BO

SUBJECT: REGIME FINGERS OPPOSITION ACTIVIST FOR 2005
BOMBINGS

REF: 05 MINSK 1163

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Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (d).

Summary

¶11. (C) On October 5, Belarusian law enforcement authorities arrested prominent youth opposition leader Pavel Krasovskiy on suspected involvement in two bombings in 2005 that injured approximately 50 people in northeastern Belarus. If formally charged and found guilty, Krasovskiy could face the death penalty. Krasovskiy, a vice chairman of the unregistered opposition youth NGO Malady Front (MF), had recently completed a youth activism project with Post's Democracy Commission funds when he was arrested. Krasovskiy's arrest appears to be politically motivated and connected to the criminal prosecutions of other senior MF members. End summary.

Background: Brothers in Bombs

¶12. (U) On September 14 and 22, 2005, two small improvised explosive devices (IEDs), hidden in beer cans, exploded in the northeastern city of Vitebsk (reftel). The first bomb was detonated in a flower box and injured two persons. The second was packed with nails and other metal shrapnel and injured as many as 50 persons inside a discotheque.

¶13. (U) In October 2005, President Lukashenko announced that two suspects, identified as brothers Vitaliy and Yuriy Murashko, confessed to detonating the IEDs. However, for reasons unknown, authorities released the suspects in April ¶2006.

GOB Links Bombings to Opposition Activist

¶14. (U) On October 4, police in Zhodino detained youth opposition leader Pavel Krasovskiy and reportedly questioned him for almost eight hours before transferring him to a detention center in Vitebsk. Authorities claim that Krasovskiy resembles a composite picture of a person implicated in the 2005 bombings. If formally charged and found guilty, Krasovskiy could face the death penalty.

¶15. (SBU) Krasovskiy is a vice chairman of the unregistered opposition youth organization Malady Front (MF). On September 15, authorities placed MF Co-Chairman Dmitriy Dashkevich into pre-trial detention on charges of running an

unregistered organization. Two other MF leaders, Boris Goretskiy and Oleg Korbun, face similar charges but to date remain free. Krasovskiy also currently leads projects conducted by the Zhodino-based youth NGO called "Zhodzina Youth Movement 'Right!'.". This organization received a grant of USD 7,000 from Post's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program in November 2005 to support the development of a youth civic movement in Zhodzina. The program's duration was July 26 to September 27, ending just days before Krasovskiy's arrest.

¶6. (C) On October 12, Poloff discussed Krasovskiy's case with MF Acting Co-Chairman Siarzhuk Lisichonak, who described how Zhodino police had lured Krasovskiy into custody under false pretenses by summoning him on October 4 for questioning regarding a brawl that Krasovskiy allegedly witnessed. Zhodino police transported Krasovskiy to Vitebsk where authorities interrogated him about the 2005 Vitebsk bombings for nearly eight hours. Authorities released Krasovskiy but ordered him to appear at the Vitebsk police department on the morning of October 5. Police formally arrested Krasovskiy when he reported to the police station the next day.

The GOB Tightens The Noose with Charges of Murder and Rape

¶7. (C) Lisichonak also confirmed press reports that the authorities are investigating Krasovskiy's involvement in the rape and murder of two women in 1999, when Krasovskiy was 16 years old. Krasovskiy has also not been formally charged for this crime.

Possible GOB Motives

¶8. (C) Lisichonak insisted that Krasovskiy has no connection

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with the Vitebsk bombings or the Marashko brothers. Lisichonak speculated that the authorities' efforts to frame Krasovskiy for the 2005 bombings and the 1999 murders serve three GOB interests. First, the nature of the alleged crimes may spare the GOB the international public spectacle of another politically motivated trial like those of former presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin and the independent NGO Partnership during the summer. Second, authorities may be pressuring Krasovskiy to provide testimony against MF leader Dmitriy Dashkevich and/or plead guilty to the lesser charge of running an unregistered organization. Third, the arrests disrupted Krasovskiy's recent efforts to inspire political activism among disgruntled miners near Soligorsk.

¶9. (C) Lisichonak maintained that Krasovskiy's arrest was part of a long GOB campaign to remove Krasovskiy from the Belarusian political landscape. According to Lisichonak, authorities in July raided Krasovskiy's youth activist summer camp in an attempt to obtain evidence that would support BKGB allegations of training militants. The BKGB never filed charges but confiscated video recordings that appeared shortly thereafter on state television.

Comment

¶10. (C) The arrest of Krasovskiy for the 2005 bombings is the latest in a continuing series of repressive "legal" actions taken against the opposition, in the same vein as the Kozulin and Partnership imprisonments. It is possible that the regime targeted Krasovskiy because of the USG's support of pro-democracy youth groups. Clearly, the arrest suggests that the Lukashenko regime is prepared to prosecute on dubious charges any active leader who seeks freedom and democracy for Belarus.

Stewart